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The Athenian Mercury.

Wednesday, *December* 26. 1694.

Queſt. 1. *Whether* Rhyme *be* eſſential *to* *Engliſh Verſe* ?

Anſw. No certainly, for none will ſay *Miltons Paradice* is not *Verſe*, tho he has induſtriouſly, and in ſome places, to a fault, avoyded *Rhyme*. Now that the *Clink* in the *cloſe* is no more eſſential to *Engliſh* then 'tis to Latin Poetry will further appear from the *Notation* of both thoſe words, *Verſe* and *Rhyme*. *Verſe* is ſo denominated from its frequent and ſtated *turning*, in the *reading*, when as in ordinary *proſe* we *ſtill read on* without any ſuch. Hence we ſee the word *Verſe* is ſometimes apply'd to any portion even of *Proſe*, which is *meted out* into ſuch frequent and *ſtated turnings*, as a *Verſe* in our *Bibles*, and the *Pſalms*, where the *Neck-Verſe*, we ſuppoſe of ſome antiquity. But we take *Verſe* here in a more *reſtrained ſence*, for an exact return of the ſame meaſure, or number of *ſyllables* (unleſs in our now common *Pindarick*, tho we are apt to believe the true ancient *Pindarick* was alſo exactly *number'd*, and the *Antiſtrophe* anſwer'd the *Strophe*) thus we call *Verſe* either *metre*, or numbers, or *Rhimes*, which latter ſeems deriv'd from the Greek Ἀριθμός, being always ſpell't in old writings *Rhithm*, tho we now *ſoften* it, ſignifying no more then *Number*, whence alſo our *Arithmetick*. And the old *Monks* uſing generally no other *numbers*, but their old *gingling Leonine Verſes*, appropiated that *title* to their own rare poetry, which was generally written *carminibus rithmicis*, to diſtinguiſh them, if we miſtake not, from *Heroick*, tho there ſeems no great need on't. On the whole therefore, we conclude, that *Rhime*, as it ſignifys *number*, is eſſential to *Engliſh Verſe*, or any other; But as 'tis taken by the moderns, for the *Chyme* of the two laſt *Syllables*, 'tis ſo far from being eſſential to it, that 'tis a mighty *Clog* to our *Poetry*; tho it can't be deny'd, that it has alſo ſome *Conveniencies*, and *Beauties*.

Queſt. 2. *Pray what's the meaning of the ancient* Runick Letters *or* Characters, *which you have ſometimes mention'd, and we have alſo met with in other* Writers ?

Anſw. Our Printers had none of the Letters, or elſe we wou'd have preſented the Reader with the old and new *Runick Alphabet*, inſtead of which he muſt be content with their *Hiſtory*, and for the Characters may conſult *Waltons Polyglott*, *Samms* his *Britania*, or *Sheringham de Anglorum orig.* They were the *old Letters* of the *Goths* in *Denmark*, which their *Edda* of *Iſland* ſays were brought out of *Aſia* by *Woden*, whence that way of writing is call'd *Aſamal*, in their books. Invented firſt, they ſay, by the *Gods* reveal'd, and publiſh'd by *Fimbul*, and *inſcrib'd* (chiefly on *Rocks* and *Stones*,) by their great *Woden*. Learned men differ about the *Etymology* of theſe *Runæ*. *Wormius* derives 'em from *Ryn*, or *Ren*, which ſignify a Run of water, and a *Furrow*, the ancient way of writing being like that of *ploughing*, going to the end of the *Line*, and then back again. *Spelman* in his *Epiſtle* to *Wormius* is of another opinion, deriving it from the *Saxon Rhyne*, a *Secret*, or *miſtery*; to which opinion *Sheringham* includes, and gives theſe reaſons. That *Joannes Magnus* affirms, certain *Witches* in *Scandia* were call'd in that country Tongue *Adelrunus*, the ſame author adding that *Runa* ſignify'd in the *Gothick Speech*, any *Art*, and ſometimes particularly that of *Magic*, and that to his time ſeveral ſtones were found in *Gothland* with thoſe old Characters inſcrib'd, which were call'd *Runaſten*. But we ſee no reaſon from hence why *Wormius* his *Etymology* mayn't ſtill hold, from *Run*, or *Ren*; and the *Saxon Ryne* be but a ſecondary ſignification. For theſe Runick Letters had been, it ſeems, ſo far abus'd to *charms* and *Incantations*, that ſometime after the converſion of the *Goths* to *Chriſtianity*, they were left off in all the *Gothick Kingdoms*; In *Spain* it ſeems, as well as the *Northern Countrys*; nay they were there ſo zealous, that a Council (that of *Toledo*) expreſly forbad, and aboliſh'd them, a new *Alphabet* being invented by their firſt Biſhop, *Ulphilas*, who tranſlated the Bible for 'em, part of which, namely the 4 *Evangeliſts*, *Junius* has given us. And no wonder if *Ulphilas* uſed *Ryne*, and the words akin to't, in an ill ſence in his Verſion, *Spellmans* great argument for his *Etymology*, becauſe he found 'em generally ſo underſtood in that Country when he came to convert 'em: but ſtill the firſt Notation may be *true*, and the poor Letters in themſelves innocent as well as the *Carmina* of the *Latins*. However, 'tis certain they pretended to do as ſtrange things with theſe *Runick Characters* then, as the *Laplanders* do now, or the *Grecians* and *Romans* formerly to charm *Serpents*, calm the *Sea*, obtain Love, conquer Enemys, &c. Of which ſee more in *Saxo Grammaticus*, and their other Authors: They having many *Poems* of this ſort little behind *Virgils. Ducite ab urbe*, or the *Greek Pharmaceutica*, whence he copy'd it, tho perhaps more ancient then both, one of which, were it not for the *Length* on't, wee'd here give the Reader in *Engliſh Verſe*, wherein, if it ſuffers not in the Tranſlation, he'd find perhaps as much *Spirit*, and as true ſtrokes of *Poetry* as in any of the ancients, which were always *ſung* by their *Scaldry*, like the *Britiſh Bards*, and *Orpheus*, (who is thought by ſome Learned men to have been a *Getes*) *Homer*, and other Fathers of the *Greek Poetry*, and that to inſtruments, generally the *Harp*, in uſe among the *Hebrew*, *Greek*, *Welſh*, and we believe *Scythian Poets* too as well as the reſt. And 'was by theſe they pretended as high as any to the *Furor Poeticus*, which they ſtile *Scald* in their own Language. They call'd theſe *Poems* of theirs, *Runeſtaves*, not unlike the *Rapſedies* of the ancients, if deriv'd from a *ſtaff*, as ſeems not unlikely. Theſe *Scaldra* were in great reputation among 'em, being their Divines, *Chronologers*, *Hiſtorians*, *Philoſophers*, and *Muſitians* as well as *Poets*, as was the cuſtom among all the *Northern Nations*, and by their *Poetry*, Inſtruments, and Voices together, might really move, *paſſions*, and effect ſtrange things on their auditory, without being Conjurers neither, as in the ſtory of King *Ericus* and others. And ſo much of the *Runick*, *Poetry* and Letters.

Queſt. 3. *In the Road, or near* Newcaſtle, *one Captain* Edwards *lay at Anchor, who had on Board with him that Voyage a* young man *that never was at* Sea *before: The Captain coming out of his Cabin, diſcover'd near* 200 *ſail of ſhips all under ſail, whereupon he call'd the* young man *up to ſee them, who coming out, ſits him down with his hand againſt his Head, and falls aſleep, till the* rolling *of the* Sea, *and working of the ſhip toſt him overboard in that poſture ſtill faſt aſleep, where he lay buoying upon the* Sea *for ten minutes, or more, before he was taken up, and till they began to pull his* wet cloaths *off, did not wake, nor was at all ſenſible where he had been: This ſtory I heard ſolemnly affirm'd by the* Captain *at an* Aldermans Table, *in the ſame* Town *where the* young mans *Father liv'd. I deſire your thoughts what reaſon there can be given, why he did not ſink? for aſſuredly he had not learnt to ſwim, being ſoon after drown'd near the ſhore.*

Anſw. A rare Fellow for a *Freſh water Souldier*, and had he but got *perfect* at this art, might have ſav'd the *Expence* of a *Packet-Boat*, and Footed it over to the *Hague or Groyne*. But it ſeems he was but a *bungler* at it, for like the *Philoſophers ſtone-men*, he cou'd not the ſecond time hit his firſt Experiment, tho belike he was awake the ſecond time he fell over-board, and his

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gift lay only in *swiming* in his *sleep*, which seems much the more *marvellous*, because most agree, that even those who are us'd to walk in their sleep, the least wet immediately wakes 'em, for which reason they set *Jobs of Water* by their *Bed-side*, tho we confess there's difference between walking and *swiming*, and yet we have read somewhere, either in *Wandy*, or some such correct judicious author, of a certain spark, (we can't just now tell ye his Christian name) who had the gift of swimming at this rate in his *sleep*, oftentimes washing himself in the hot nights, till one of his companions once on a time dogging him to the River, happen'd unluckily to call out to him as he was swimming, which so frighted him (as 'twou'd any body else) when he waked and found himself in the midst of a *Hole* as deep as a steeple, that he sunk to the bottom immediately, and was never after seen or heard of; 'Twas therefore very well that the *Ships Company*, did not *Hail* the young man, while he was buoying up like a *Barrel'd-watch*, or a Fleet of *Laplanders* in *Egg-shells*, with some *Devil of Du-Bart*, their *Convoy*; for if they had, ten to one he had gone to the bottom, like a Plummet, and brought news what ground; and very likely the reason he was drown'd in his second Expedition was because they did not observe the same caution. To be serious, tho the story look strange, we don't think it impossible, having our selves known a Sailer who fell *over-board* asleep in a dark night, and was carry'd at least a *Quarter of a mile* to *Leeward* to some Coal-Ships, who took him out, tho he came to himself again before he got thither. We can assure the Reader this is truth, and cou'd name the ship, time, and place, if any need on't, tho this spark cou'd swim, whereas the other it seems cou'd not. We cou'd tell him also of another person in these wars, about the time that *Cork* was taken, who when the ship wherein he was, happen'd to be blown up, where he lay at that time delirious of a Calenture, was thrown out into the *Sea*, and fell plumb-down in his *Cradle*, till looking about him, and finding his Vessel was scarce *light*, *launch* off, and swum to shore, never more hearing of his disease (*Probat.* an infallible way to cure a Feaver:) not much unlike was, we suppose, the Instance before us, the young man fell equally, and exactly, the first time, and not struggling, his cloaths might support him till he was recover'd, the contrary to which perhaps might happen when he repeated the Experiment.

Quest. 3. *Whether 'tis contrary to the* Laws *of God or man, to* defend Life *when* assaulted, *and the danger no other way to be avoided, and whether a man is not* Felo-de-se *who wilfully kills it?*

Answ. We think there's but very little difficulty in this Question, supposing my Life be *unlawfully* assaulted, by a *private man*, or the like, not commission'd by *lawful authority* for the executing *Justice*, for if I defend my self in such a case, and happen in my defence to kill any of the assailants, I'm guilty both of *Rebellion* and *Murder*. And in *private* quarrels, I ought not to hazard anothers life, but when there's no other way to defend my own.

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